



Egg Rock Update

Newsletter of the Seabird Restoration Program
of the National Audubon Society

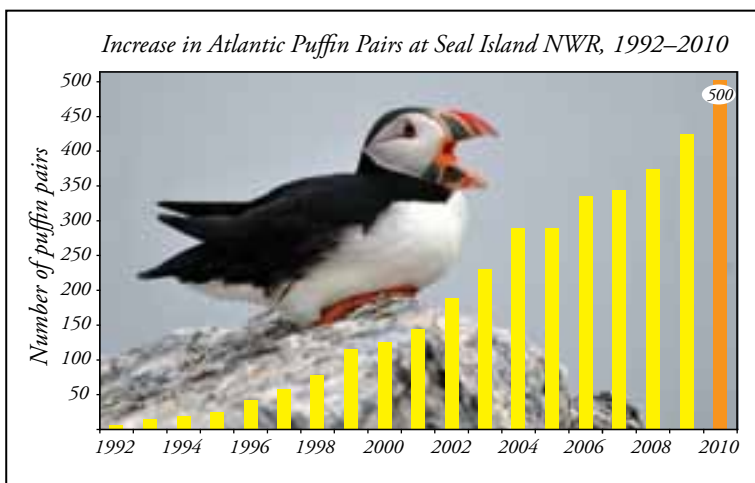
2010

PUFFIN MILESTONE REACHED ON SEAL ISLAND NWR!

More than 500 pairs of Atlantic Puffins nested at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)—an 18% increase over the estimated 425 pairs that nested at this remote seabird nesting refuge in 2009.

From 1984–1989, 950 puffin chicks were translocated to Seal Island NWR. A total of 912 of the chicks fledged, but eight years passed before the first pairs nested in 1992. These were the first puffins to nest at the island since the original colony was extirpated due to excessive hunting in 1887. Although the colony had a painfully slow start, remarkable growth followed leading to the major milestone of more than 500 nesting pairs this summer.

Seal Island NWR's puffin colony is now the largest south of the Canadian border. Because puffins nest deep under boulders and new subcolonies are popping up throughout the 65-acre island, our current challenge is counting the number of nesting pairs! ❖



To learn about how you can adopt an Egg Rock puffin, visit www.projectpuffin.org.

TRIBUTE TO TWO SUPER PUFFINS: Y54 AND Y33

In 2009, at age 32, Y33 and Y54 were acknowledged as the oldest known puffins in North America. Y33 returned to Egg Rock in 2010, giving her further distinction for reaching age 33. But to the distress of puffin researchers, there was no sign of Y54. We remain hopeful that he will return next year, but absence usually means that a puffin did not survive the rigors of winter.

Both puffins are notable because they were moved to the island as chicks from Newfoundland and they helped to found the colony. Y54 nested for the first time when he was four years old, sired 26 chicks with three females and occupied the same burrow for 29 years! Y33 nested for the first time when she was 7 years old and then reared 23 chicks with four different mates in the same burrow for 26 years; Y33 retains the title of the oldest known puffin in North America. ❖

EGG ROCK PUFFINS ALSO SET RECORD!

Although the Eastern Egg Rock restoration project began 11 years before the start of the Seal Island NWR project, the formation of nesting pairs got off to a much slower start. Between 1973 and 1986, 954 puffin chicks were moved from Great Island, Newfoundland to Eastern Egg Rock where puffins were also extirpated by excessive hunting; the last pair nested in 1885. Like Seal Island, it took eight years for the first pairs to nest, but the colony then increased slowly, stabilizing at less than 20 pairs for fifteen years. Then in 1996, sustained colony growth began. Ten new pairs nested this year, increasing the nesting population to 123 pairs, a 15% increase over the 107 pairs that nested in 2009. ❖



Y33, the oldest-known puffin in North America, emerges from her burrow on Eastern Egg Rock.

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Richard Podolask

The 2010 Maine Research Team

Front: Pete Salmansohn; Liz Zinsser;
First Row (left to right): Rosalie Borzik;
Scott Hall; Laurel Sindewald; Ariel Evans;
Rachelle Pinault; Steve Kress; Leah Mucca-
rione; Caitlin Hume; Martyna Boruta; Katie
LaCreta; **Second Row (left to right):** Emily
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Wood; Alexandra Zelazo-Kessler.

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Amy Beich

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Martyna Boruta

Warren-Wilson College Intern
Laurel Sindewald

Project Puffin Visitor Center Volunteers
Beth Long;
Brian & Marilyn Trask

See Puffins in Maine!



Learn more at
www.projectpuffin.org/PuffinTours.html

BALD EAGLE RECOVERY HAS UNEXPECTED EFFECTS ON MAINE SEABIRDS



John Drury

At their nesting colonies, Double-crested Cormorants are vulnerable to attacks from Bald Eagles.

While Maine's Bald Eagle population recovery is evidence of a cleaner environment and the effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act, recent declines in New England seabird populations suggest that the recovery of Bald Eagles may have negative effects on Maine seabirds.

Due largely to habitat destruction and widespread use of pesticides such as DDT, Maine's Bald Eagle population was reduced to less than 60 pairs by the late 1970s. However, a ban on DDT in the States (it's still used outside the U.S.) and protection of nesting habitat has led to a resounding population increase for Maine's Bald Eagles. By the summer of 2010, the population had increased to more than 475 pairs.

However, eagle recovery is contributing to unanticipated problems for Maine seabirds. The highest risk is to nestling gulls and cormorants that are too young to fly. When eagles land on a nesting island, incubating adults fly off their nests, increasing the risk that eagles and opportunistic gulls will swoop in and take unprotected eggs and chicks. Exposed eggs and chicks are also subject to extreme temperature changes.

Eagle attacks may also be contributing to serious population decline for Maine's state-threatened Great Cormorants. Numbers of these birds have plunged from 260 pairs nesting on seven islands in 1992 to just 65 pairs on four islands in 2010. A recent study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Coastal Islands NWR, and the Massachusetts Division of Wildlife determined that populations of Great Black-backed Gulls, Herring Gulls and

Double-crested Cormorants have declined by more than one-third.¹ Many factors may be associated with these declines. For example, most coastal open landfills and sardine processing stations in Maine where gulls once fed are now closed. Likewise, the once-abundant source of fish waste is greatly reduced because of overfished stocks of bottom fish such as cod.

Further research is needed to confirm the relationship between rising eagle numbers and seabird declines, but it is clear that seabirds would be at greater risk from eagles if not for the resident island stewards (interns and volunteers) who spend their summer protecting most of Maine's threatened puffins and terns.

Over the last ten years, island interns are seeing eagles with increasing frequency. For example, At Seal Island NWR in outer Penobscot Bay, eagles were a rare sighting during the five-year period 2001–2005, with an average of two days from mid-May through mid-August. While eagle sightings remain uncommon, our resident staff reports a three-fold increase with an average of seven sightings per summer during the past five years. At Eastern Egg Rock, eagles are seldom seen near the island when the puffins and terns are present, but as these species migrate and our interns leave in mid August, the eagles immediately show up to take young Laughing Gulls. Eagles would certainly impact puffin and tern nesting colonies if it were not for the Audubon seabird stewards living on nesting islands. ♦

¹ Recent Changes in the Distribution and Abundance of Gulls and Cormorants. 2010. Linda Welch, Scott Melvin; Rick Schaffler; Julie Ellis. Proceedings of the First World Seabird Conference. Victoria, B.C.

VOLUNTEER POWER AIDS SEABIRDS

Volunteers have long served an important role with Project Puffin. Each summer about 30 volunteers sign up to work for two or more weeks under the direction of research coordinator Scott Hall and our island supervisors. Aviculturists, avid birders and undergraduates looking for their first solid field experience with wildlife benefit from the chance to work closely with wild birds. These four volunteers in particular deserve recognition for their dedication and long-term service.



Anthony Hill: 15 summers from 1996–2010



Stella Walsh: 12 summers from 1999–2010



Sam Slater (l): 8 summers from 2004–2010
Nicki Hall (r): 14 summers from 1997–2010

FIELD EXPERIENCE FOR AVICULTURISTS

Pioneering our relationship with zoos and aquariums in 1990 were Mary Gunther and Debbie Zombeck, aviculturists with the National Aquarium in Baltimore and Sea World, respectively. Both drew on their field experiences to affect changes in their institutions' captive landscape that better mimic a wild puffin colony. Likewise, observing seabirds in their natural habitat helps aviculturists better understand the puffins' captive counterparts.

Gunther and Zombeck recommended Project Puffin's volunteer opportunity to their colleagues and at professional conferences. Twenty-one years later, participating partners include: Sea World; National Aquarium in Baltimore; New England Aquarium; St. Louis Zoo; Henry Dorley Zoo; San Antonio Zoo; Franklin Park Zoo; Roger Williams Park Zoo; Zoo New England; Bronx Zoo; Central Park Zoo; Cincinnati Zoo; Smithsonian's National Zoological Park; and Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific.

NEW SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS

Two new programs offered through Road Scholar (formerly Elderhostel) allowed participants another way to volunteer for the Seabird Restoration Program. The popular Maine Seabird

Biology and Conservation sessions offered a mix of birding and service learning on Audubon sanctuaries, and provided opportunities for hands-on work.

Censusing the large Herring and Great Black-backed Gull colony at Ross Island gave Road Scholar participants the opportunity for close-up views of gull and eider eggs and newly-hatched gull chicks on an island typically off-limits to visitors. September Road Scholars improved tern habitat on Eastern Egg Rock and removed washed-up lobster gear that threatened seabirds with entanglement.

The programs were based at Audubon's legendary Hog Island Audubon Camp where the participants also enjoyed great camaraderie, comfortable lodging, and gourmet meals prepared by Hog Island's renowned chef, Janni LaBerge. ♦

Visit <http://hogisland.audubon.org> to learn more about the 2011 Road Scholar sessions at Hog Island or to sign up.

Grants from L.L. Bean and North American Wetland Conservation Act (administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) funded the purchase of vegetation-management equipment and weed barrier materials.



SHORT-TAILED ALBATROSS RESTORATION UPDATE

Our seabird restoration methods have been used in 14 countries to help 49 seabird species, including the Short-tailed Albatross.

Dr. Hiroshi Hasegawa of Toho University is helping these birds make a steady comeback at their largest nesting colony on Torishima Island, located about 375 miles south of Tokyo. Increasing attention is now focused on Mukojima Island, an historic nesting island where, like Torishima, albatross were extirpated by the feather hunting trade. Researchers were thrilled this year when two Black-footed Albatross that were translocated to Mukojima Island from Torishima Island in 2007 showed up and began courting. This bodes well for the project to restore Short-tailed Albatross to Mukojima which has so far translocated 40 chicks from Torishima Island.

Likewise, there is good news from Midway Island in the Hawaiian Archipelago, where a 23-year-old male that has held a territory for 11 years paired with a 7-year-old Short-tailed Albatross.



Tomohiro Deacchi

In 2007, biologists hand-fed Black-footed Albatross chicks that were translocated to Mokojima island. This year, two of these birds returned to Mokojima and were observed courting.

Read the full article at www.projectpuffin.org/ERU.html



Maine Island Updates



OUTER GREEN ISLAND

- 15 pairs of endangered Roseate Terns nested, fledging 26 chicks. Nest boxes and a sound attraction system encouraged nesting.
- 1,151 pairs of Common Terns nested; 2,400 chicks fledged—a 38% increase over 2009!
- *Astronurf* carpet permitted 75 pairs of Common Terns to nest in an area previously overrun by rank weeds.

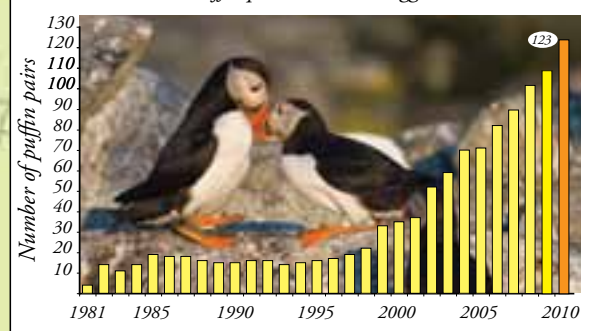


EMILY WHELAN



ROSE BORZIK

Increase in Atlantic Puffin pairs at Eastern Egg Rock, 1981–2010



ROBERT KRAMERIAN

EASTERN EGG ROCK

- 123 nesting pairs of puffins—a 15% increase since 2009; nearly all pairs fledged a chick.
- 714 pairs of Common Terns nested—a 45% decline. Likewise, Roseate Terns declined from 101 pairs to 82 pairs; Arctic Terns declined from 100 to 83 pairs.
- 15 geolocators were attached to Arctic Tern bands to identify migration and non-breeding season movements.
- Geolocators were attached to leg bands placed on 15 Arctic Terns to learn their migration and non-breeding season movements.

Declining tern numbers reflect the trend toward dense, rank vegetation, habitat favored by Laughing Gulls, but shunned by terns.



Great Horned Owls were captured and removed from Jenny Island and Pond Island NWR.

JENNY ISLAND

- 32 pairs of endangered Roseate Terns nested, producing 40 chicks.
- Common Terns increased by 47% to 854 pairs, up from 578 pairs in 2009; 1,600 chicks fledged.
- A Great Horned Owl was trapped by Audubon staff and relocated far from the island by volunteers from Avian Haven, a rehabilitation center located in Freedom, Maine.

POND ISLAND NWR

- 590 pairs of Common Terns nested—a 34% increase above 2009.
- Nesting success (over 1,200 nestlings) was the highest of all colonies in the Gulf of Maine.
- A Great Horned Owl killed at least seven Common Terns during the last week of June, driving terns to abandon at night. The owl was captured by Audubon staff and relocated far from the island by Avian Haven volunteers.



STEPHEN W. KRESS

Although 76 pairs of Least Terns nested this season, survivorship was not high for the chicks.

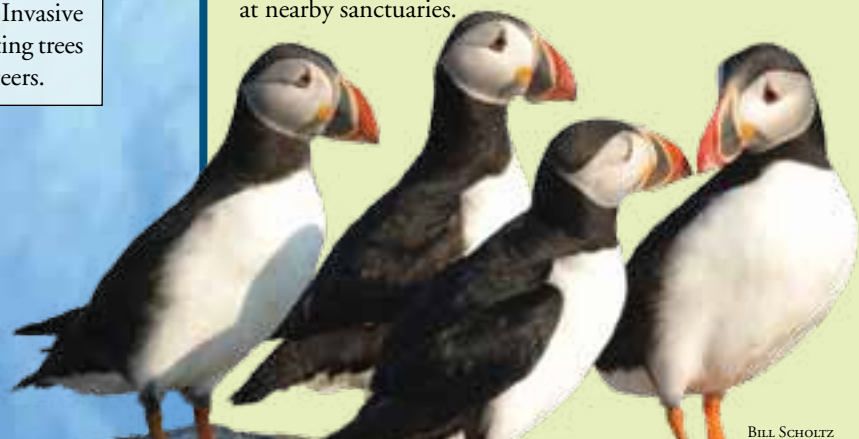
STRATTON ISLAND

- 857 pairs of Common Terns and 12 pairs of Arctic Terns nested producing 1,465 and 11 fledglings.
- Roseate Terns produced 34 fledglings.
- 76 pairs of Least Terns nested, but at least two Black-crowned Night-Herons and an injured Herring Gull ate most chicks.
- Great Egrets increased from 19 pairs in 2009 to 34 pairs in 2010.

Mink and night-heron predation led to half the normal hatching rate, yet 1,500 Common, Arctic, and Roseate Tern chicks fledged. Invasive bittersweet was removed from heron nesting trees with help from Maine Audubon volunteers.

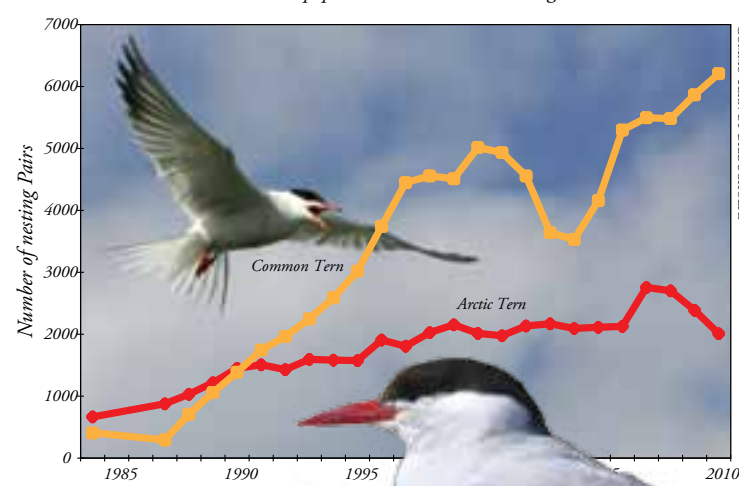
MAP BY ROBERT HOUSTON

The 2010 summer was warmer than usual with an average high temperature of 63 degrees (F) and the second warmest average sea surface temperature in the past nine years at 57 degrees (F). Rainfall was above average at 11 inches. Food for seabird chicks was ample to abundant at southern Maine colonies, but poor at the mid-coast colonies. These conditions led to excellent nesting in southern Maine, but relatively poor nesting success elsewhere, especially for terns. Predation was severe at Stratton and Matinicus Rock, displacing terns to nest at nearby sanctuaries.



BILL SCHOLTZ

Common and Arctic tern populations at Audubon managed islands in Maine



COMMON TERN BY BILL SCHOLTZ



ARCTIC TERN BY BILL SCHOLTZ

Right: Puffins wearing geolocators must be retrapped one year later to retrieve winter range data.
Below: A close-up of the smaller geolocators used in 2010.



AUDUBON BIRD CAM PHOTO



NATHAN BANFIELD

SEAL ISLAND NWR

- Over 500 pairs of puffins fledged at least 385 chicks.
- Now the largest colony in Maine (with 3,028 pairs); Arctic Tern pairs increased by 25% to 1,238; Common Tern pairs increased by 13% to 1,788.
- Poor food supplies resulted in the lowest nesting success for terns in 20 years; still, about 1,500 tern chicks fledged.
- Five of eight puffins with geolocators attached in 2009 returned in 2010, but none were recaptured.

Atlantic Herring, the most important food was largely absent from the diet of puffins and terns. Terns attempted to raise chicks on low-energy crustaceans, tiny hake, and oversized butterfish. Puffin chicks could swallow the large fish better, but appeared to grow more slowly than usual.

MATINICUS ROCK

- Arctic Terns declined by half to 674 pairs from 1,278 pairs in 2009.
- Common Terns declined to 273 pairs from 359 pairs in 2009.
- Laughing Gulls declined by 17% to 958 pairs—good news for the terns.
- Up to 144 Common Murres were present, but no eggs were discovered.
- 18 geolocators were attached to puffin leg bands to help discover the puffin's winter range.

Food for seabird chicks was in short supply this year and predation by hungry gulls was more serious than usual. Many of the terns previously nesting at Matinicus Rock have apparently moved to nearby Seal Island NWR.



CAROLINE POIT

On July 28, a plump Manx Shearwater chick was discovered and at least three additional burrows were active. This is the second consecutive year manx have successfully produced a chick on Matinicus Rock, which is the only known breeding site for the species in the U.S.

HOG ISLAND AUDUBON CAMP RE-OPENS!

Launched in 1936 as an innovative residential program for teachers, the Audubon Camp in Maine at Hog Island has inspired thousands of teachers and people of all professions and ages. The visionaries who founded the program would be proud to know that the Hog Island Camp is alive and well, as there is a greater need than ever to connect people of all ages with wildlife and nature.

After closing in 2009 to reorganize, 2010 marked the reopening of Audubon's legendary camp with ornithology programs sponsored by Project Puffin. Five sessions for adults and teens were offered and 166 participants from 32 states and New Brunswick attended. Most of the programs were sold out and people flocked to the island to take part in the programs which featured some of

the country's best known birders including Pete Dunne, Lang Elliott, Kenn Kaufman, Steve Kress, and Scott Wiedensaul.

Join us for our 75th anniversary season in 2011 and experience the magic of Hog Island, made famous when birding guru, Roger Tory Peterson, walked the island trails. We'll offer popular ornithology programs; two seabird management service-learning sessions; an educator's week, during which we'll share fun and practical projects to encourage elementary and middle school children to connect with nature; and a week-long Audubon Chapter Leader's program. ❖

The 2010 programs were the result of collaboration between Project Puffin, Maine Audubon, Kieve-Wavus Education, Inc., the American Birding Association, and the Cornell School of Hotel Administration.

2011 Hog Island Programs

- **Maine Seabird Biology and Conservation I**
- **Joy of Birding**
- **Field Ornithology**
- **Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens**
- **Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week**
- **Audubon Chapter Leadership Program**
- **Maine Seabird Biology and Conservation II**



For more information or to register, visit <http://hogisland.audubon.org> or call (607) 257-7308, Ext. 14



We thank the forty-four volunteers and campers from previous years who returned in 2010 to help in the kitchen and with building maintenance through Friends of Hog Island: June Austin, Max Bogren, Charlotte Brown, Beth Bullock, Phyllis Coelho, Eric Eichorn, Kira Ellsworth, Beverly Engle, Roger Engle, Vic Gabay, Lena Gallitano, Carol Garfinkle, Anthony Hill, Al Hodson, Dorothy Hodson, Libby Hyatt, Ken Keffer, David Klinger, Mary LaCreta, Lauren Lesser, Barbara Levine, Jo McCartan, Mike Moore, Tom Moore, Julie Moulton, Janine Parziale, Gaye Phillips, Robert Phillips, Carlene Riccelli, Juanita Roushdy, John Sanderson, Sally Sanderson, Julie Seifert, Becca Singelenberg, Lynn Stroud, Diane Sylvester, Gary Sylvester, Barbara Tucker, Loretta Victor, Helen Walsh, Phillip Witmer, Donna Yorkston, George Yorkston.

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Jenny Island and Outer Green Island. We also thank Beth Goettel, Brian Benedict and the staff of Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex for their continued cooperation with our studies on Seal Island NWR, Pond Island NWR and Matinicus Rock. Robert Houston, Biologist for the USFWS Gulf of Maine Program graciously provides logistic and field support. We also thank the Prout's Neck Audubon Society for their loyal support for our work on Stratton Island.

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